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which is of great size, and is terminated by a stone staircase having two return flights leading to a corridor which communicates with the bed-chambers. This hall also communicates by doors with the several portions of the building below, those on the west side leading to the servants' rooms, and those on the east to the state apartments, which consist of a breakfast parlour, dining-room, ante-room, and drawing-room, all of which are of noble proportions, and their woodwork of polished oak.

It will be seen from the preceding description that the general character of this building is that of a castle; and we may add, that the details of its architecture are for the most part those popularly but erroneously called Saxon. But, like most modern structures of this kind, it has but little accurate resemblance to an ancient military fortress, and its architectural details present that capricious medley of styles of various ages, ecclesiastical, domestic, and military, so commonly found in modern buildings of this description. Such an incongruous amalgamation of styles, however, in an architectural composition, is, it must be confessed, not very consistent with refined taste, and cannot be too strongly reprobated; but it has existed for a considerable time, and will unfortunately continue till architects become skilful antiquaries as well as tasteful artists, and their employers acquire such an accurate judgment and knowledge of art as will enable them to form a correct opinion of the capabilities of those they employ, and not take their estimate of them, as now, from fashion or popular reputation.

The demesne attached to this noble residence ranks second to none in Tyrone in extent, the beauty of many of its features, and the fineness of its timber. The Kildress river, which passes through it, is crossed about the centre of the demesne by a picturesque bridge of five arches; and from this point the most favourable views of the surrounding scenery are to be had. Looking northwards, the sloping banks of the river, at the opposite sides of an extensive meadow, are thickly planted with larch, fir, beech, and ash, from the midst of which, an aged oak is here and there seen to rise above its younger and less aspiring companions; and, looking westward, the turrets of the castle overtop the deep masses of foliage which cluster round it on every side. In like manner, to the east, the river winds its way through a tract of rich meadow land, the banks of which are fringed with willows and thorn trees; and to the south, the grounds slope gently up from the river, and present detached groups of elms and oaks of the most luxuriant character. The views in this demesne are indeed such as might naturally be expected in conjunction with a mansion of such magnificence, and will, as we are persuaded, not create a feeling of disappointment in the minds of any, whether artist or pleasure tourist, who may be led by our remarks to visit them.

P.

THE SPANISH MOTHER.

DURING that dark and ill-recorded period in which Spain was little more than a field of battle between the Moors and the Christians, the Sanchos of Navarre held the most conspicuous rank among the peninsular potentates, and Sanchez "et Mayor" was the most conspicuous of the Sanchos. Besides the throne of Navarre, he had succeeded to the royalty of Arragon, and the sovereignty of Castile was the dower of his queen. He had married the beautiful Elvira Muna early in life; and before he had reached the full prime of manhood, two of his sons, Garcia and Gonsalo, were able to bear the panoply of a knight; and a third, Fernando, a boy of thirteen, was sighing for the day to come when he too should have the spur upon his heel and the sword upon his thigh. Another son, also, King Sancho boasted of, but not by Donna Elvira. In his very first battle he had been taken prisoner by a Moorish captain of high rank, and confined in a dreary dungeon many days and nights, until at length his escape was effected by means of the daughter of his conqueror, a maiden of exquisite beauty named Caya, who had seen him, and fallen in love with him. This Moorish girl the generous young prince would gladly have married, if the political or religious laws of Navarre would have permitted him; but he tried to persuade himself and her, that, under such circumstances, the tie which bound them together after their flight from her father's fortress would be nearly as sacred as if it were a conjugal one. The offspring of their love was a boy, whom Sancho named Ramiro, and who grew up with the king's legitimate children. Caya too—it was the custom of those days—lived at court,

and was paid respect and honour besides, as the deliverer of the country's hope. She had abjured, at least outwardly, her Moslem creed, and, for the sake of her son, whom she tenderly loved, conformed in all respects to the customs of her adopted one. In truth, however, she was a quiet, unpretending creature, who never said or did anything to the injury of any one with malice prepense, and not being feared, was not hated. Even Elvira herself, hateful to Caya for giving her no reasonable cause for jealousy since her marriage with Sancho (which was a mere matter of state policy), made the Moorish woman the confidante of most of her joys and sorrows. And many were the sorrows of that gentle queen. Sancho had ever been indifferent towards her, though she repaid his coldness with devoted attachment. He was, besides, continually away at the wars, in imminent danger from the chances of battle, while she, at home, was ever mourning over the neglect of her lord and the disobedience of her children. Garcia had made, before his twentieth year, no fewer than three different attempts to excite a revolt in Ribagorza during the absence of the king, impatient as he was to seize the reins of command. Gonsalo, cunning as a fox, and darkly-working as a mole, was continually endeavouring, by secret machinations, to render the people of Navarre discontented with the government of his mother and her councillors; and even the child Fernando had exhibited signs of a rebellious nature, and was but too apt to listen to the dangerous instructions of his brothers. Elvira, therefore, was greatly to be pitied, debarred, as she thus found herself, from all the joys which she naturally yearned for as a wife and a mother. If Caya was an ambitious woman, as most of her nation were, or if she had cherished, under an outward show of meekness and contentedness, thoughts and purposes of bringing about by means of her opportunities the establishment of the Moorish dynasty in Christian Spain, she might have drawn hope of success in her schemes from the dissensions of the royal family; at least she might have sought in them some excuse for making her darling Ramiro a sharer in one of those arbitrary partitions of the Spanish kingdoms which the barbarous notions of the times rendered of frequent recurrence. But Caya was gifted with too noble a mind to seek any advantage, however tempting, by unworthy means. She still fondly loved the chivalrous prince with whom she fled from a cruel father's roof, and with whom, for a few happy, happy years, she had forgotten the pleasant olive groves of Grenada, under the wild pine forests and glaciers of the Pyrenees. She sincerely compassionated the sorrows of Elvira, and therefore the afflicted queen had a safe and steady friend in her generous rival. Let the reader "judge with knowledge" these two women in their affection for one another—

In those old, romantic days,
Mighty were the soul's commandments
To support, restrain, or raise!

Their rivalry was of the forbearing kind which existed between the two wives of that old crusader mentioned in the *Orlandus* of Kenelin Henry Digby, and which the first poet of our day* has thought it worth his while to embody for all eternity in his "Armenian Lady's Love." But Elvira had another trusty friend in Sancho's "master of the horse," whom he was wont to leave behind him as deputy when he went to the wars. Don Pedro Sesse was a faithful minister and a merciful viceroy. A gallant soldier in his youth, he was an enemy to treachery and to everything that tended to infringe the laws of chivalry. He it was who had frustrated the designs of Garcia and Gonsalo, and had therefore earned their hatred. Elvira looked to him as her best guide and protector amidst the sorrows of her lot.

In this state was the kingdom of Navarre, when the news came of a great victory gained by Sancho over the Moors of Corduba, a place at that time the metropolis of Moorish Spain. As this event was considered a decisive blow to the hopes entertained by the Moors of obtaining possession of Castile, which was their principal object, Sancho's speedy return, after an absence of several years, was anticipated at home, and great were the preparations made for his triumphal entry to the fortress of Najara, where was the royal palace and the residence of the chief nobility. In the midst of these preparations, however, matters took place which turned the palace into a scene of mourning and dismay.

Don Pedro had a beautiful daughter named Blanca, whom the unprincipled Garcia had long but vainly tried to influence

* Wordsworth.

by his dishonourable proposals. The virtuous Blanca repelled his advances with proper scorn; and when at length he found that he could not obtain her willing consent, he determined to carry her off by violence. An opportunity soon arrived. Blanca was sitting alone one day in her garden, enjoying the loveliness of the prospect that stretched from the terrace-foot to the summits of the distant mountains, when Garcia, who had been waiting for a favourable moment, seized her in his arms, and bore her away towards a spot where he had horses and attendants ready for the accomplishment of his villanous project. Before the maiden was out of the reach of aid from such as might be disposed to assist her, her shrieks were heard by Ramiro, who happened to be sauntering near the place. He was at her side in an instant with his drawn sword in his hand.

"Ruffian, desist!" exclaimed he, with wrath in his voice and eye, as, passing his left arm round the waist of Blanca, he waved his armed right hand before the ravisher's face; "though thou bearest my father's blood in thy degenerate veins, it shall dye the turf at our feet, if thou loosest not hold of this maiden."

"Away! base-born hound—half-Spaniard, away! and dare not to thwart me in my pleasure," cried Garcia, foaming with rage and disappointment.

Ramiro answered not, but, freeing the frightened girl by a dexterous manœuvre from the grasp of Garcia, and placing himself between them, he struck the latter with the flat side of his weapon, as if he thought him unworthy of a severer blow, though the fire of his royal blood tingled in his cheeks at the insult.

Garcia quailed before the lofty scorn of Ramiro, and he shouted to his attendants to come to his aid.

"Now, for my father's kingdom I would not let thee escape, dastard as thou art!" said Ramiro, as he strode up to Garcia and forced him to defend himself. In a moment Ramiro was standing over his prostrate and bleeding antagonist with his sword lifted for the death-blow. As he was about to strike in self-defence, hearing the rapid step of Garcia's assistants, he saw that they were already panic-struck at the sight of their fallen master, and were turning back in flight. Staying his hand, he said,

"Rise, Garcia—for thy father's sake I spare thee. Thou wilt henceforth avoid the son of the Moorish Caya." Then taking the lady Blanca, who was fainting with the effects of her terror, once again in his arms, he bore her into the house of Don Pedro, and left the vanquished ravisher in pain of body and mortification of heart.

"Tell me, lady," said Ramiro, as he leant over the form of the reviving Blanca, "how art thou? Assure me that I leave thee well and happy."

"Leave me not yet, noble Ramiro," said Blanca sweetly. "How can I sufficiently repay thee for thy valiant protection?—all I can imagine would be too poor a recompense!"

"Oh, not too poor, dear Blanca," said Ramiro passionately, "is the gift thou canst bestow: give me thy love, if one who hath the stain of Moorish lineage may hope to deserve it, and I will bless the opportunity that gave thee to my arms."

Blanca only blushed in answer. She knew Ramiro had loved her long before, and that he was honoured and esteemed by her father. The lovers plighted their troth to each other that hour, and felt themselves worthy of one another.

The ferocious temper and evil heart of Garcia left him no repose until he had matured a scheme of vengeance to effect the ruin of Ramiro, if possible, before the return of his father. All the more violent means he rejected, as he was unwilling to compass so important an event except by plausible pretexts. He therefore determined to work upon the fears of Elvira, and as far as possible to arouse her jealousies. Having first simulated a show of repentance for his past ill treatment, which he did so well as effectually to deceive the unsuspecting queen, he next informed her that a secret correspondence had been carried on between Caya and the king during the whole period of the last expedition, forged proofs of which he showed her; and insinuated that Caya had succeeded in making the king promise to put Ramiro in possession of the fairest portion of his dominions, to the exclusion of Elvira's offspring. This latter stratagem did not succeed so well with Elvira, and she openly told him she had too great faith in Caya's friendship for her to believe she would seek to deprive her of her queenly prerogative, or her children of their just rights. Garcia for a long time continued to follow up his plan by these insinuations and others of a similar kind, but

when he found he was playing a wrong game, he could no longer conceal his rage, and he warned Elvira not to oppose him in his attempts to get rid of Ramiro, with a sincerity which the unhappy woman well knew was unaffected.

Garcia's first step was a demand that a council of the nobility should be held to determine upon a matter to be brought forward by him, at which council the queen should preside in person. This being granted, he formally accused Ramiro of having attempted his assassination, exhibited his wound, and produced his attendants, who had been suborned by him, to testify to the truth of the accusation. Ramiro was then summoned to answer to the grave charge of having attempted the life of the heir to the crown—a crime for which death by torture was the punishment in Navarre. Ramiro defended himself by narrating the circumstance of his encounter with Garcia simply as it occurred, along with the cause which led to it; and the beautiful Blanca shrank not from appearing before the court and the nobles, to bear witness for her betrothed. Several of the nobles, however, who were in the interest of Garcia and the abettors of his projects, declared that the testimony of Blanca was not sufficient to clear Ramiro of the imputation, and demanded that judgment should be given against him. Don Pedro, who had been aware of the true facts of the case, burning as he was with resentment against Garcia, besought of the queen, for the sake of justice, and as a punishment due to a rebellious and unnatural son, that Garcia, on the contrary, should be made to plead against the charge of having offered violence to the daughter of the king's vicergerent. Elvira was about to decree that Garcia's charge had not been substantiated, when she caught the eye of the accusant fixed upon her with a look of demoniac malignity which chased the blood from her cheek, and made her tongue cleave to the roof of her mouth. Her fortitude was nearly deserting her, and her love of justice giving way to her fear of Garcia's cruel revenge, when a stir was heard at the entrance of the court, and Caya, with disordered dress, dishevelled hair, and eyes of fire, rushed up to the foot of the tribunal, and throwing herself on her knees on the marble step, clasped the feet of Elvira, and looked up into the queen's face without speaking a word.

"What does this Moorish devil in our hall of justice?" said Garcia, in a stern voice: "remove her."

No one stirred, for all were intently watching the scene. Caya still knelt without speaking, looking up to the queen's face; but now the large tears were gathering in her eyes, under their jet-black lashes, and now they rolled down upon her dark cheek, which was no longer lustrous with the hue which Sancho in his youthful years had loved to look upon.

Elvira gently stooped her head towards the suppliant, and was about to speak to her, when Garcia, with increased vehemence in his tone, again demanded her removal, and Elvira, shudderingly, drew back.

"Oh, listen not to him!" at length gasped Caya; "heed not his cruel voice. Thou wilt not give my boy to his bloody vengeance; thou wilt not put his precious limbs upon the wheel; thou wilt not tear his manly sinews with red-hot pincers! Oh, queen, give me back my Ramiro!"

"Nay, Caya, what will become of me?—there is misery before me whichever way I turn!" said Elvira, as she saw Garcia approaching.

"Stand back!" shouted Caya, springing to her feet, and speaking to Garcia; then turning to Elvira,

"I charge thee let him not touch me—if thou valuest the life of thy son, admonish him to beware of hurting a hair of the Moorish woman's head, or of that of his child: and not of my child alone—of the child of Sancho of Navarre. And thee, too, Elvira, I charge to beware how thou givest over to judgment the offspring of thy lord! Hast thou no pity, Elvira? Look not to Garcia—look to me. Dear Elvira (and here Caya ventured to take the queen's hand), pity thy poor Caya, thy servant, and Sancho's servant, who never willingly offended thee. Thou wilt—I see thou wilt. I am thy friend once more—thy sister!" she whispered, as her tears flowed upon the neck of the subdued Elvira, and she clasped her to her bosom.

The queen, then, confirmed in her decision by the assenting looks and murmurs of the lord deputy and the majority of the council, declared Ramiro guiltless of the crime imputed to him, and the assembly broke up.

"Caya," said Elvira, as they retired together, "I have done much for thee this day. I have leaned towards thy child against my own. I have made an enemy of the fruit of

my own womb for the sake of a rival in my husband's love."

"For the sake of truth and justice thou hast done it," replied Caya, "and thou shalt have thy reward."

"Thou knowest not what it is to fight against the temptations which nature puts in our path—pray that thou mayest not know them."

"I have had a victory many times over such," said Caya, "or thou wouldst not now be queen. Perchance other such temptations may arise—and oh, Elvira, be sure they shall not overcome me."

Caya spoke prophetically, but even *she* could not have guessed how soon or to what an extent her constancy was to be tried.

Garcia left the council maddened with rage, and burning with thoughts of vengeance, not only against Ramiro, who had supplanted him in his love, and Pedro, who had been made deputy, principally with the intent that he should watch and counteract his villainies, but against Elvira and Caya, and even Blanca. Some faint outlines of a design either to cut off Sancho himself, and usurp the whole of his father's possessions, or at least compel him to share the sovereignty with him, began also to connect themselves together in his thoughts. In short, he was determined that he should accomplish the ruin of all, and that some blow should be struck instantly, for Sancho was already on his way to Navarre.

A circumstance, of trifling moment in itself, furnished him with sufficiently plausible means of entering at once upon his plan. Sancho had taken in fight from a Moorish chieftain a most beautiful horse, which in a short time became such a favourite with him, that, fearing some accident would deprive him of the noble steed amidst the perils of war, he had sent him home to Elvira, with strict injunctions that no one should be suffered to mount him in his absence. These injunctions were forgotten by the queen, who suffered Don Pedro to use the animal occasionally. This fact Garcia laid hold of to sustain him in accusing the queen of adultery with Don Pedro, and he announced to the nobles his intention of so doing on the arrival of his father.

Sancho had been six years away, and had heard of nothing in the interim from Navarre that was not calculated to diminish the little love he ever felt for Elvira, and increase the romantic attachment he felt towards Caya. Ramiro, the offspring of that attachment, he loved beyond all his sons for his nobleness of nature and person, and he secretly wished for some excuse for distinguishing him above the others. For those six years he had been sojourning in the scenes of Caya's childhood, where every thing reminded him of her, and of his early amour; and as it would only have been of a piece with the practices of royalty in even later and more civilised times to have divorced himself from Elvira, he must not be over-harshly dealt with if he confessed to himself that he would be happier to find her dead than living on his return. What his thoughts were, therefore, may be guessed, when, as the gates of Najara were flung open for his entrance, he was met with the intelligence that his queen and her alleged paramour were conspiring against his honour, his kingdom, and his life!

Sancho could imagine no possible motive by which Garcia might be actuated in preferring his accusation, ignorant as the king was of what had lately occurred, so he at once ordered the queen to be arrested, and to be brought to trial in the Cortes of the kingdom. The unhappy Elvira was not allowed even to see her lord on his return, but was thrown into a dungeon, as was also Pedro, until the preparations for the trial were complete.

When the day arrived, Elvira and Pedro were led prisoners into that hall of justice in which they had so lately sat as judges. Elvira cast a mournful and reproachful look towards Sancho, who sat cold and severe upon his chair of state, but he did not notice her. She was so thin, and pale, and wretched-looking, that the very officials of the court wept at the sight of her; while those to whom she had been kind and merciful in her day of power, groaned audibly as they surmised the event of the trial. She was placed on a seat in the centre of the hall, and the preliminaries were at once proceeded with.

Garcia first came forward, and repeated his accusation, adding a tissue of circumstances calculated to confirm his statement. When he had finished, an officer desired the queen to defend herself against his testimony.

"If I had been unfaithful to Sancho," said she, "it was before thy birth, Garcia; for neither a gleam of Sancho's goodness, nor a feature of his face, has descended to thee! Some

devil betrayed me in my dreams, and left me his image to nurse at my bosom, and bring up at my knee."

"Is this thy answer?" said Garcia, with a bitter smile; "this reviling of the first-born of thy king will not save thee from the stake."

"The stake!" shrieked Elvira, "and is it to this thou bringest me?" And then rising, and standing before Garcia, she continued—"Man—for son I cannot call thee now—how canst thou be so cruel? Is there no voice in a mother's misery to touch thy heart?"

Garcia answered not, but desired the officer to proceed and summon the next witness. The officer called out the name of Gonsalo!

Not alone Elvira, but the whole court were surprised to see the king's second son presenting himself as his mother's accuser. Gonsalo had a new series of alleged facts to produce. He had been allured by the promises of Garcia, and his avarice and love of power outweighed whatever feelings of reluctance he might otherwise have experienced. His courage failed him, however, as he perceived those looks of aversion among the spectators which it required more firmness than he possessed to disregard; and having closed his testimony, he was slinking away, in order to escape the glance of Elvira, when she called him back, and catching his hand, addressed him:—

"What have I done to thee, Gonsalo, that thou shouldst blast my fame and take away my life? I would not injure a hair of *thy* head! Three times I snatched thee from the grave before thy childhood was past, when thou wert ailing. I lost strength and sleep and beauty while bending over thy cradle. I would I had been in my grave before thou sawest the light! I will not curse thee—I will not even beg thy pity; but when thou hast children of thine own, thou mayest guess what thou hast made me suffer, and that will be curse enough—go!"

"The infante Don Fernando, appear!" cried the officer.

A pang, as if her brain had been pierced with a fiery needle, smote the wretched mother as the boy answered to his name. A loud buzz of disapprobation ran through the assembly, and Sancho himself seemed as if he could bear the unnatural scene no longer; but intense curiosity now prevailed with all, and overcame every other feeling. A dead silence ensued while Fernando stood confronting the queen.

He was a pale, light-haired lad, with exceedingly soft blue eyes, which he inherited from the pure stock of the Gothic sovereigns of Spain, descending to him unbroken from that glorious time when Pelayo swayed the strongest European sceptre, before Tarik led his conquering bands from Africa. His ringlets streamed down his shoulders as he bent his head and crossed his small white hands upon his breast in token of reverence towards the king. As he appeared there in the graceful dress suited to his years, he looked more like a creature of dreams, when holy imaginations colour them, than a false witness against his own mother. Elvira looked at him for full a minute without moving or speaking, until at length his innocent-looking beauty gave birth to some vague confidence in her that he was not coming to destroy her, but perhaps the contrary. The moment this feeling took possession of her, she bounded forward with a shriek of delight, and flinging herself on the ground before him, she clasped his knees, and letting her head sink between her arms, she endeavoured to stay so, while she wept for the first time since she entered the hall. Fernando, however, drew back violently, and disengaged himself from her embrace. The queen looked up at him half-vacantly as he did so; and then she arose, and in a solemn though flattering voice she said,

"What art thou going to do or to say, Fernando? They may take me away to the stake and burn me, if thou beliest me now, for thy crime will be worse torture to me than any they can inflict."

"Speak, Fernando," said the king.

Fernando trembled and hesitated, but a motion from Garcia caught his eye and emboldened him to go on. He told that he had seen Elvira giving to Don Pedro Sesse, from the royal stables, that favourite steed which the king had ordered should be ridden by none but himself.

Sancho's brow flushed with sudden anger when he heard this. "Elvira! Pedro!" said he, "is this true?"

"It is true," said Elvira, "but I alone am guilty! Pedro knew not of thy command. As I live, he did not. Let me suffer, oh, Sancho, for this one fault, but pardon the innocent!"

"She prays for pardon for her paramour!" cried Garcia, exultingly; "what other proof is needful?"

"Hast thou aught more to declare?" said the king to Fernando, in a tone of displeasure.

Again the boy trembled, and looked towards Garcia, whose eagle eye was like a guilty spell upon him.

"Let him look at the queen as he speaks," said Sancho.

The boy turned towards his mother, but his cheek reddened as he did so, and he cast his eyes towards the ground without speaking.

"Speak on!" said the king.

"He will not speak!" said Elvira; "he will not make a liar of Nature, who is telling the truth for him in his cheeks and eyes! Look, monsters, the tears are coming to his eyes. Oh holy drops, ye should be treasured among saintly relics—ye shall be balm to these parched and thirsty lips!" And here the queen bent to the earth, and kissed the tear-drops on the ground which had fallen from Fernando's eyes.

"Fernando, speak!" said Garcia.

In a voice broken by sobs and terror, Fernando began to say that he had seen Don Pedro stealing by night to the queen's chamber, when he was interrupted by Elvira, who again clung to him with frantic earnestness.

"Thou sawest it not! Oh, say thou sawest it not! My boy, the heavy wrath of God will fall upon thee if thou dost not unsay this fearful falsehood. I am not cursing thee, but I would avert the curse. Thou must unsay it. It is not possible mine own flesh could *all* rebel against me. What is it has bewitched thee, Fernando, to do what devils would leave undone? Dost thou know what thou art doing to me? They will burn thy poor mother in the market-place for an adulteress! Thou wilt give thy mother to die in the torments of the damned—thy mother, that never crossed thee in thy ways—that fed thee with the milk of her breasts—that rejoiced in thy beauty. Oh, my God! oh, my God! have pity upon me, and soften this boy's heart!" said she, looking up for a moment, and then coaxingly fawning upon Fernando, with a faint smile upon her features. She continued—"My child! my pretty boy Fernando! wilt thou not unsay those wicked words? Ah, let me kiss thee, and say I forgive thee, and we shall be mother and son together for the rest of our days in some far off place out of the ways of these people. I will love thee better than they, Fernando. They are killing thy soul now, and they will kill thy body after, as they are killing mine, if thou dost not hearken to me. Oh, that I might have life and length of days, only to be away with thee where I could look into thy blue eyes and play with thy golden curls from morning till night. Oh, child, have mercy upon me!"

"Mother!" cried Fernando, throwing himself upon the queen's neck, "forgive me, and I will unsay all!"

Elvira wound her arms about the infant's form, kissed him without saying a word, and fainted at his feet.

"Her artifices have prevailed with the boy," said Garcia, with ill-dissembled rage, "but the testimony of others is not to be thus overborne."

"Wilt thou enter the lists against her champion, if any dare to defend her with his sword?" said the king.

Garcia was silent.

"If thou wilt not," said Sancho, "Elvira shall be declared innocent, and her accusers traitors."

"Let her champion appear, then," replied Garcia. "What my tongue asserts, my sword shall ever prove. There lies my guage," and he threw his glove into the centre of the floor.

But in all that crowded assembly there was not one who came forward to take up the guage of Garcia. They all pitied the queen, and believed her innocent, but the dread of the future tyrant was too powerful a motive to keep them, so far at least, on his side.

"At the end of three days," said the king, "if no champion appear for the queen, she shall perish by the flames, and with her, her alleged paramour."

The lists were prepared, and at the noon of the second day a knight in bright silver armour, whose name was unknown, appeared in the queen's defence. His vizor was drawn over his face, and his device gave no clue to the curious. The whole court was assembled to witness the combat, and Elvira occupied a seat nearest to the side at which her champion appeared. The signal was given, and the contest commenced. It was soon decided. The unknown knight quickly unhorsed his antagonist, and after a brief struggle with the sword, Garcia fell to the earth desperately wounded.

"Confess the innocence of the queen," said the unknown

knight, in a voice which struck Garcia to the soul, "or thou diest on the spot."

"She is innocent!" feebly articulated Garcia, as he writhed in the agony of his wounds.

Taking up the sword of his vanquished adversary, the unknown cavalier brought it to the feet of Elvira, and then, gracefully bending on one knee, he lifted the vizor from his casque, and for the first time the queen knew that she had been indebted for life and the preservation of her fair fame to the son of the king by her Moorish rival.

"Madam," said Ramiro, "not to me alone, but to Caya thy friend, thy thanks are due. Thou hast been a sister to her—let me be a son to thee."

Elvira could only weep her thanks.

We find in Mariana, and also in Rodrigo of Toledo, that Sancho of Navarre, at his death, partitioned his kingdom thus:—To his eldest son Garcia he left Navarre and Biscay; to Gonsalo he left Ribagorza; to Fernando, Castile; and Arragon to a natural son named Ramiro. This was that Ramiro of whom mention is made in the preceding narrative. But we do not find in any of the old authors (and much we wonder that any event connected with so curious and touching a piece of history could have escaped them) that this same Ramiro enjoyed the lordship of Arragon with Blanca, the beautiful and virtuous daughter of the cavalier Don Pedro Sesse.

R. M.

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF SELECTING CLEAN FLAX SEED.

IN recent numbers of the Penny Journal, Martin Doyle has published two valuable papers upon the necessity of selecting good seed, and I would wish to call the attention of the cultivators of flax, who form so numerous a body amongst the small farmers of the north and west of Ireland, to the absolute necessity of attending to the seed of that plant, and not to purchase the cheaper seed that is sometimes offered to them, in preference to that which, although rather more expensive, is yet free from the seeds of a very noxious weed which are usually mixed with the cheaper flax-seed. The weed to which I refer is one of those curious plants, which, from their peculiar structure, are unable to draw their nourishment directly from the earth, but are obliged to feed themselves by sucking the juices of other plants, and thus destroying them, or weakening them so greatly as to prevent their producing a crop that will repay the cultivator for his labour and expense. In the case of the flax, the weed grows from seeds deposited in the earth with the seed of the flax, and at first appears as a slender pale thread, twisting about in different directions until it meets with one of the stems of the flax, when it immediately twists itself round it, and produces curious little knobs upon its inner side, which pierce the outer coat or bark of the stalk of the flax, and suck from it the juices which it has drawn from the ground, and prepared for its own nourishment. The root of the weed then withers away, but the weed itself commences its most vigorous growth, for until it had obtained a victim upon which to feed, it had been unable to produce any thing except the slender fibre that I have already mentioned, and would have soon died if it had not succeeded in seizing upon the flax. Its stem then increases in thickness, and, twisting round all the flax plants that it can reach, it receives enough of nourishment to produce its flowers, which form pretty little yellowish white heads, of about half the size of a nut, consisting of numerous small flowers so placed together as closely to resemble a small mulberry in form and appearance, although not in colour. This weed is called Dodder, or by botanists *Cuscuta epilinum*, and is commonly to be found in flax-fields in several parts of England and Scotland, but is happily less frequent in Ireland, although I have seen it (in 1840) in the county of Mayo. In England it often quite destroys the crop, and I understand that such was the case a few years since in the neighbourhood of Westport and Newport, county Mayo.

I have now to point out the way to avoid this pest. It is found that the seed of flax obtained from America is quite free from it, but that it is nearly always very plentiful in seed from Odessa and other parts of Russia. Now, the Russian seed is cheaper than that from America, and so the poor people are tempted to buy the former in preference to the latter, although, by following an opposite course, they would escape